

Approved For Release
NORFOLK (Va.)
VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Circ.: m. 107,809
S. 140,020

Front Edit Other
Page Page Page

Date: MAR 10 1962

Letters to the Editor

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What We Know About Powers

Editor, Virginian-Pilot:

The recent "case" of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers has brought to light many interesting facts which should be considered.

First, although the Central Intelligence Agency officially cleared Powers on Tuesday, there are many points not clarified and many questions not answered, which should in due course be brought before the public. The question whether or not the U-2 was shot down by a Russian missile probably never will be answered, but that, in a long range viewpoint, is really immaterial. The pilot of such a reconnaissance plane is able to destroy his plane and cargo by activating a switch. Powers reported that he was in no position to pull this destruct switch without endangering his own life. No one is able to pass any judgment on a person faced by such a situation. But there still remains the question: How far does loyalty to one's country go?

Second, the exposing of our reconnaissance flights over Soviet territory was embarrassing in all respects, but the Russians do not have "lily-white hands" either. This was proved by the captured MIG which was downed in Italy. As yet, the actions of the pilot, when compared to our own U-2 pilot, are as different as night from day. This cannot be taken as a condemnation of Powers' conduct, however.

Third, the criticism directed against the operations of our Central Intelligence Agency is entirely unwarranted. In a world such as ours, there is a necessity for certain undercover activities. Idealism is fine, but not always practical. If we are to remain free, we must always stay one step ahead of the Russians. A steady flow of

information is necessary if we are to maintain this one step.

Fourth is the question of where is to be found the patriotism which guided our leaders during the American Revolution. Nathan Hale was not paid an excessive salary for his services during the War for Independence. Our moral value of honor to one's country has been misplaced somewhere along the way.

As to whether or not Powers is a hero, the answer must be a question mark. Each person must make his own decision, and only history will have the final say so. But the actions of Mr. Powers do not seem to be those of one who has the interests of his country at heart.

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